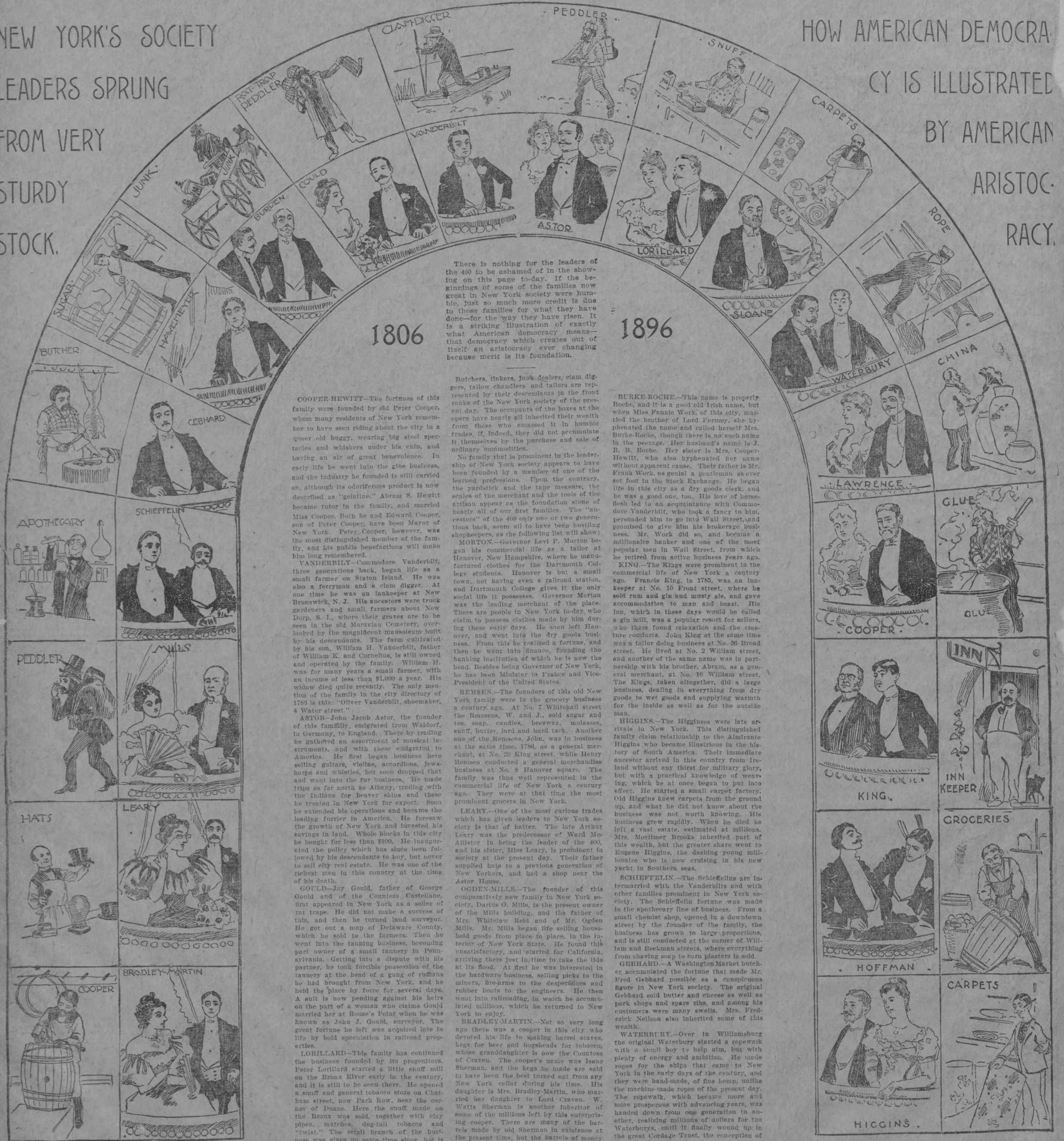


IF THE ANCESTORS OF THE "400" WERE ALIVE TO GO TO THE OPERA

NEW YORK'S SOCIETY
LEADERS SPRUNG
FROM VERY
STURDY
STOCK.

HOW AMERICAN DEMOCRACY
IS ILLUSTRATED
BY AMERICAN
ARISTOCRACY.



There is nothing for the leaders of the 400 to be ashamed of in the showing on this page to-day. If the beginnings of some of the families now great in New York society were humble, just so much more credit is due to those families for what they have done—for the way they have risen. It is a striking illustration of exactly what American democracy means—that democracy which creates out of itself an aristocracy ever changing because merit is its foundation.

Butchers, tinkers, junk dealers, clam diggers, tallow chandlers and tailors are represented by their descendants in the front ranks of the New York society of the present day. The occupants of the boxes at the opera have nearly all inherited their wealth from those who amassed it in humble trades. If, indeed, they did not accumulate it themselves by the purchase and sale of ordinary commodities.

No family that is prominent in the leadership of New York society appears to have been founded by a member of one of the learned professions. Upon the contrary, the yardstick and the tape measure, the scales of the merchant and the tools of the artisan appear as the foundation stone of nearly all of our first families. The "ancestors" of the 400 only one or two generations back seem all to have been hustling shopkeepers, as the following list will show:

MORTON.—Governor Levi P. Morton began his commercial life as a tailor at Hanover, New Hampshire, where he manufactured clothes for the Dartmouth College students. Hanover is but a small town, not having even a railroad station, and Dartmouth College gives it the only social life it possesses. Governor Morton was the leading merchant of the place. There are people in New York to-day who claim to possess clothes made by him during these early days. He soon left Hanover, and went into the dry goods business, and then he went into finance, founding the banking institution of which he is now the head. Besides being Governor of New York, he has been Minister to France and Vice-President of the United States.

REMSEN.—The founders of this old New York family were in the grocery business a century ago. At No. 7 Whitehall street the Remsens, W. and J., sold sugar and tea, soap, candles, beer, wine, molasses, butter, lard and hard tack. Another one of the Remsens, John, was in business at the same time, 1786, as a general merchant, at No. 29 King street, while Henry Remsen conducted a general merchandise business at No. 8 Hanover square. The family was thus well represented in the commercial life of New York a century ago. They were at that time the most prominent grocers in New York.

LEARY.—One of the most curious trades which has given leaders to New York society is that of hatter. The late Arthur Leary was the predecessor of Ward McAllister in being the leader of the 400, and his sister, Miss Leary, is prominent in society at the present day. Their father supplied hats to a previous generation of New Yorkers, and had a shop near the Astor House.

OGDEN-MILLS.—The founder of this comparatively new family in New York society, Darius O. Mills, is the present owner of the Mills building, and the father of Mrs. Whitelaw Reid and of Mr. Ogden Mills. Mr. Mills began life selling household goods from place to place, in the interior of New York State. He found this unsatisfactory, and started for California, arriving there just in time to take the gold at its flood. At first he was interested in the hardware business, selling picks to the miners, fire-arms to the desperadoes and rubber boots to the engineers. He then went into railroad building, in which he accumulated millions, which he returned to New York to enjoy.

BRADLEY-MARTIN.—Not so very long ago there was a cooper in this city who devoted his life to making barrel staves, head and hoops for barrels, and whose granddaughter is now the Countess of Craven. The cooper's name was Isaac Sherman, and the kegs he made are said to have been the best turned out from any New York cellar during his time. His daughter is Mrs. Bradley-Martin, who married her daughter to Lord Craven. W. Watts Sherman is another inheritor of some of the millions left by this enterprising cooper. There are many of the barrels made by old Sherman in existence at the present time, but the barrels of money he left are creating a good deal more stir in the world.

SCHERMERHORN.—This old New York family traces back to an ancestor who is described in the New York Directory of 1786 as "Sam Schermerhorn, ship chandler, 13 Prince." Thus for more than a hundred years the Schermerhorns have been residents of New York, antedating the Astors, the Delanceys, the Kanes, the Lorillards, the Stuyvesants and others whose names are not to be found in this first New York Directory. Sam Schermerhorn, the ship chandler, was well-known along the water front a hundred and ten years ago. He was a large, genial, whole-souled man, and everybody called him "Sam." He was so unpretentious that he apparently made no objection to thus being described in the Directory. At his store, No. 13 Prince street, he sold tallow dips, twine, tar, nails, soap and candles, and there were none better in the New York of those days.

BURKE-ROCHE.—This name is properly Roche, and it is a good old Irish name, but when Miss Fannie Work of this city, married the brother of Lord Fernoy, she hyphenated the name and called herself Mrs. Burke-Roche, though there is no such name in the pedigree. Her husband's name is J. B. B. Roche. Her sister is Mrs. Cooper-Hewitt, who also hyphenated her name without apparent cause. Their father is Mr. Frank Work, as genial a gentleman as ever set foot in the Stock Exchange. He began life in this city as a dry goods clerk, and he was a good one, too. His love of horseflesh led to an acquaintance with Commodore Vanderbilt, who took a fancy to him, persuaded him to go into Wall Street, and promised to give him his brokerage business. Mr. Work did so, and became a millionaire banker and one of the most popular men in Wall Street, from which he retired from active business years ago.

KING.—The Kings were prominent in the commercial life of New York a century ago. Francis King, in 1785, was an innkeeper at No. 10 Front street, where he sold rum and gin and musty ale, and gave accommodation to man and beast. His inn, which in these days would be called a gin mill, was a popular resort for sailors, who there found relaxation and the creature comforts. John King at the same time was a tailor doing business at No. 56 Broad street. He lived at No. 2 William street, and another of the same name was in partnership with his brother, Abram, as a general merchant, at No. 16 William street. The Kings, taken altogether, did a large business, dealing in everything from dry goods to wet goods and supplying warmth for the inside as well as for the outside man.

HIGGINS.—The Higginses were late arrivals in New York. This distinguished family claim relationship to the Almirante Higgins who became illustrious in the history of South America. Their immediate ancestor arrived in this country from Ireland without any thirst for military glory, but with a practical knowledge of weaving, which he at once began to put into effect. He started a small carpet factory. Old Higgins knew carpets from the ground up, and what he did not know about the business was not worth knowing. His business grew rapidly. When he died he left a vast estate, estimated at millions. Mrs. Mortimer Brooks inherited part of this wealth, but the greater share went to Eugene Higgins, the dashing young millionaire who is now cruising in his new yacht in Southern seas.

SCHIEFFELIN.—The Schieffelins are intermarried with the Vanderbilts and with other families prominent in New York society. The Schieffelin fortune was made in the apothecary line of business. From a small chemist shop, opened in a downtown street by the founder of the family, the business has grown to large proportions, and is still conducted at the corner of William and Beekman streets, where everything from shaving soap to corn plaster is sold.

GEHBARD.—A Washington Market butcher accumulated the fortune that made Mr. Fred Gebhard possible as a conspicuous figure in New York society. The original Gebhard sold butter and cheese as well as pork shops and spare ribs, and among his customers were many a swell. Mrs. Frederick Neilson also inherited some of this wealth.

WATERBURY.—Over in Williamsburg the original Waterbury started a ropewalk with a small boy to help him, but with plenty of energy and ambition. He made ropes for the ships that came to New York in the early days of the century, and they were hand-made, of fine hemp, unlike the machine-made ropes of the present day. The ropewalk, which became more and more prosperous with advancing years, was handed down from one generation to another, realizing millions of dollars for the Waterburys, until it finally wound up in the great Cordage Trust, the conception of that brilliant financier, James M. Waterbury. The Cordage Trust smashed the Waterbury fortune, and now James M. Waterbury has taken off his coat and gone back to work at the old shop to try and make it over again.

POST.—There have been Posts in New York from the time of its earliest settlement, and the Posts are prominent here at the present day. The earliest member of this family of whom there is record was Jeriah Post, who conducted a butcher shop at No. 8 Cherry street. Butcher Post sold tripe, pork and choice cuts of beef to the New York swells of a century ago, and he delivered his own meats at their houses. He lived upstairs over his butcher shop, and history records that he was one of the first men every morning to open his shop for business in the city. He lived to a good old age, and left numerous descendants, who have intermarried with other distinguished families.

COOPER.—The Cooper family is one of the oldest families in New York. A century ago, if you were furnishing a house and asked where you should buy your china and glassware, everybody would have told you to go to the store of Richard Lawrence, at No. 76 Golden Hill. This Richard Lawrence, who sold jugs, mugs, pots, candlesticks and other useful articles of china and glass, accumulated what was a fortune for those days, and left a large family of children. These, with their descendants, have spread the name of Lawrence throughout the ranks of society, and the Lawrences of the present day point to more than one hero whom their family has given to the country.

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From Honest Toil and Self-Denial

SLOANE.—There is no record of the Sloanes in the early days of New York's history, but no list of the families prominent in society at the present day would be complete without a reference to them. The Sloanes inherited a fine carpet business, which was built up by an ancestor who was as good a judge of Brussels or Axminster as any in the city in his day. This fine commercial institution they have broadened and extended, until it is the leading carpet house in the city at the present time. W. D. Sloane married a daughter of William H. Vanderbilt and is the father of an interesting family, and a genial, prosperous gentleman. There is no one better able to judge a carpet than he, while of old cloth, linoleum and matting he has an extensive knowledge.

BURDEN.—The amount of money represented in the Burden jewel robbery would have more than bought out the original junk business from which the vast Burden iron industries have grown. Up at Troy the Burden furnaces extend now over a large area. But this great business had a small beginning two generations back, when contracts for even the smallest quantity of iron were not despised by the founder of the family.